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ABSTRACT

One resource to reinforce reading skills and to encourage the transfer of reading skills to other areas of learning is the field trip. Activities to practice decoding skills, vocabulary development, comprehension skills, and oral language and listening skills can generally be arranged for in all field trip activities. Diagnostic teaching can occur during pretrip planning and posttrip discussion. The similarities between a field trip and a story in the basal reader include cast of characters, plot, theme, vocabulary, specific sequential events, and secondary information. This comparison may help the teacher see the potential for reinforcing those reading skills appropriate to a specific field trip. (TJ)

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USING FIELD TRIPS TO REINFORCE READING SKILLS

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Every elementary classroom teacher has a personal philosophy of how to teach reading. This individual teaching philosophy is reflected in the way the teacher works throughout the entire school day and will influence when, what, and how reading is taught in that particular classroom.

One approach to teaching reading would encourage the reinforcement of previously taught reading skills in classes other than the so-called regularly scheduled reading period. This philosophy would have children apply reading skills previously introduced to the variety of activities they are working at throughout the school day. Children actually would be encouraged to transfer the skills introduced earlier in their structured reading classes to other on-going activities. This technique of developing reading skills would require the teacher to deliberately and systematically seek ways to reinforce skills in all curriculum areas.

Field trips are but one example where numerous opportunities exist to polish or reinforce reading skills previously introduced to the children. It is possible to do this without once referring to the term reading while the teacher and children are involved in the preplanning or follow-up activities. Not only can reading skills be reinforced and transfer of learning take place but this spaced practice will assist in the retention of reading skills.

The preplanning portion of the field trip as well as the post field trip activities lend themselves particularly well to the reinforcement of reading skills but this is possible only to the extent that the teacher is familiar with the place to be visited. Therefore, the field trip site must be previewed if reading related activities are to be planned for the children.

Different field trips and different age levels will suggest what reading skills can be involved. Specifically identifying which reading skills readily relate to the field trip to be taken allows for the reinforcement as well as the transfer of these reading skills to a new situation. Deliberate preplanning by the teacher will pinpoint <u>what</u> reading skills as well as <u>how</u> these reading skills can be included in the preparatory and follow-up activities of the experience. Only then can the teacher be sure appropriate reading skills are not by-passed during the preplanning and follow-up stages of the trip.

Numerous ways exist to incorporate reading skills into

field trip activities. Numerous reading skills can be naturally and easily built in for the children. The following ideas suggest the possibilities for doing this.

The introduction of field trip vocabulary permits the children to apply different decoding skills to new words. Vocabulary discussion prior to the field trip reminds children that words often are used in a variety of different settings and that the meaning of a word may or may not change in a new environment. Some known words will acquire multiple meanings while other new words become meaningful to the children for the first time. For example: Stock was introduced for the farm field trip and now again in preparation for the trip to the department store. Blemished fruit was discussed at the grocery store but now children are encouraged to learn what special handling blemished candy receives at the candy factory. Many children have emptied the jello mold at home but never realized that candy is poured into molds, also. Children know tires and balloons are inflated but now they learn inflatable pillows are used at the fire station, too. Bike and car accessories are generally an accepted part of a child's world but they expand their understanding of the term by discussing fashion accessories prior to visiting the department store.

A teacher's attitude toward words soon becomes obvious. Attitudes are contagious and children can be expected to reflect their teacher's interest in new vocabulary words. They will model their teacher's curiosity in derivations of words such as

cottage cheese or pasturized and attend to the structural elements of new words if their teacher does this regularly throughout the school day.

With encouragement from their teacher chances are the children's vocabulary will be expanded and enriched by listening for and talking about specific field trip related words. Having these new words decoded and discussed lays the foundation for the children to readily recognize these same words in books, magazines, and newspapers on another occasion.

Words are forgotten if they aren't put to use. Vocabulary games can be a part of the follow-up field trip plans. Teachers tend to go to the same field trip sites each year, therefore, vocabulary games developed one year could easily be useable the next year. Upper grade children can be challenged to develop their own field trip related vocabulary games for use with their immediate peers.

Other activities can lead to improved vocabulary skills. Classify words or collect words around a theme such as the dairy, museum or factory visited. Extend the word list prepared before the trip with the new words collected during the trip. Children might list adjectives for the different kinds of candy seen on the candy factory trip. Have them describe that piece of candy using as many words as possible to tell how it looks, feels, smells, and even tastes. Read the list of ingredients on the candy bar wrapper. Give synonyms for words listed or perhaps even antonyms for the same words. As a class project make a

field trip dictionary and have the children write the sentences for the dictionary.

Deliberate planning by the teacher can get children intellectually, emotionally and physically involved with new words or with old words used in a new way. This can be done by planning for activities pertinent to the field trips. At the same time this does not eliminate the incidental learning of new words which will occur during the field trip as well.

The previously mentioned vocabulary ideas dealt with building attitudes and skills with words by working with words. These and similar activities seem necessary if one accepts the idea that knowledge of word meanings is essential to comprehension.

As in reading class, field trips encourage the use of a variety of questions which can range all the way from the literal to the evaluative level. During preplanning for the field trip encourage your children to ask questions. At first their questions will tend to be of the literal type but asking questions beyond the literal level requires skill and children will become skillful questioners only by asking questions. Their questions can be supplemented with teacher-made, higher-level, questions and balance then will occur in the range and type of questions to be dealt with during and after the actual trip itself.

Giving children the opportunity to ask questions before the trip will encourage them to begin setting their own goals, to identify what they want to learn along with what you the

teacher feel they should learn. Children now have a purpose for observing and listening during the field trip. By asking questions they again have been encouraged to become emotionally, intellectually and physically involved in all phases of the field trip.

Working with different types of questions, be they teacher made or child made, calls for the use of different levels of comprehension skills. Like questions, comprehension skills can be categorized and such skills can develop when levels of questions encourage the use of various stages of thinking. Beginning with the literal level of comprehension one acquires skill to deal with higher levels of comprehension requiring analyzing, comparing, relating and judging. By arranging for variety in the kinds of questions asked, provision is made for using different thinking skills, also.

Other comprehension skills can be incorporated into follow-up activities. Opportunities now exist to organize and use the information gained during the trip. After visiting a nursery, department store, restaurant, train station or airport have children read for specific information from menus, time tables and order blanks. What details or descriptions are given in nursery or department store catalogues? How are abbreviations used in the catalogues? Identify the kinds of sequencing activities which occurred during the field trip. Use synonyms as well as antonyms when discussing various objects encountered. Classify items. Write similes to describe the candy or ice

cream received at the end of the trip. A visit to the green house or nursery can also encourage the use of similes or metaphors as plants are discussed back in the classroom.

Intermediate grade children may be involved in further reading from reference books. This can provide extra practice in applying flexibility in reading rate as skimming skills are used and reading for detail takes place. Before writing their reports have children organize their notes into outline form which provides for additional practice in sequencing.

Map study takes place as train and airplane routes are identified. After a trip to the nursery or greenhouse map reading skills continue to be practiced as parts of the world are located from which the plants originated.

Sequence can be taught again by following a product from the receiving department of the store to a home. Candy making permits the concept of sequencing as well as reading for details to be practiced. At the primary level, have children put simple field trip related sentences into correct sequence or cut up sentences relating to the trip and let the children put them into correct order.

Diagnostic teaching can occur during the activities dealing with field trips. This is a way of working with children and it is an appropriate way of working with children throughout all field trip related activities. During the time of preplanning, the actual field trip itself and the post-trip activities, a wealth of opportunities exist to observe children

use their skills when working with vocabulary, levels of questions and levels of comprehension.

Again one's own teaching philosophy is revealed. Whether or not the field trip is seen as another way of observing patterns of behavior or seeking feedback will be related to the value the teacher places upon diagnostic teaching for classroom activities generally.

In a systematic manner children can be observed transferring reading skills to new settings. How do they approach new words? Are decoding skills applied to the vocabulary? Is the child flexible in decoding new words? How are prefixes and suffixes handled in words like teletype, refund, and flamable?

Teacher-pupil work during preplanning activities and active involvement of children in the follow-up activities allows time for children to become proficient in handling oral language skills often recognized as a prerequisite for being a good reader. It also allows time for additional diagnostic procedures to be used by the teacher. Children are again systemtically observed as they participate in discussions, use complete sentences or run-on sentences, support opinions with data, ask relevant questions and keep to the discussion topic. What multi-syllable words are being used and by whom?

Field trips provide children with ways to develop and demonstrate an understanding of oral language skills and this then allows for comprehension of the written language encountered at another time and place. Diagnostic techniques used at this time

help a teacher to evaluate progress being made by the children in settings other than the reading class.

Teacher diagnostic techniques also are appropriate for the children's listening skills. Does the individual child show an understanding of what has been heard as well as seen during the trip? Are oral directions followed during the trip and follow-up activities? If comprehension skills appear inadequate could it be because of poor listening skills?

Actually a field trip can be viewed as being much like a story in the child's basal reader which includes vocabulary, characters, a plot, events, secondary information and a theme. Using a candy factory as an example, the similarity between a field trip and a basal reader story quickly becomes obvious.

Candy Factory Field Trip

1. Cast of Characters

   Owner
   Manager
   Plant supervisor
   Dept. supervisor
   Assembly line worker
   Truck driver
   Sales clerk
   Buyer
   Cook
   State Inspector
   Secretary
   Ad Writer-Artist

2. Plot

   Responsibilities of each "character", how do people work in the total organization?

3. Theme

   The making and selling of one brand of candy.

4. Vocabulary

   Catwalk
   Candy names

5. Specific, sequential events

Raw materials
Vat
Molds
Cooling table
Slow cooler
Conveyer belts
Assembly line
Distribution process

6. Secondary Information

Not as important but still interesting.

By comparing a field trip to a story in a basal reader one begins to see the potential existing for reinforcing previously taught reading skills appropriate to a specific field trip. Activities to practice decoding skills, vocabulary development, comprehension skills, oral language and listening skills can generally be arranged for in all field trip activities. When children participate in setting purposes for the field trip, suggest questions to be answered and share learnings afterwards, they utilize skills taught earlier in reading classes. Here too teacher diagnostic techniques note how children are handling these same skills in a new setting.

If these ideas seem familiar it is only because you the classroom teacher deal with the above skills consistently in reading classes. Field trips can be viewed as another logical way for children to apply the reading skills they have been taught when preparing for, during and in the follow-up activities of a reading lesson. Reading skills used by children are reading skills retained and their immediate world of a field trip is just another resource for them to use and apply their reading skills.

The End